<Back |

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

New Networks Monitor Power Distribution in Iraq

By Mohammed Aliwi

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

AN NASSIRIYAH, Iraq -- Restoring and improving the electrical supply in Iraq has been one of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' biggest and most costly challenges.

Although access to power varies greatly and is at times unpredictable, the USACE has restored electricity to many homes, businesses and public facilities throughout the country.

According to Priscilla E. Perry, the Gulf Region South (GRS) District program manager for the electricity sector, the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition networks, called SCADA, are now in place to monitor and control electrical generation and transmissions systems throughout all Iraq.

"The main function of SCADA is to create and maintain a digital connection in order to check the provinces' power loads and control them easily by connecting them to the central power distribution points," Perry said.

The SCADA system includes input and output signal hardware, controller networks, and communications software.

"The term SCADA usually refers to a central system that monitors and controls a complete site or a system spread out over a long distance. The bulk of the site control is actually performed automatically by a remote terminal unit or by a programmable logic controller," the engineer said.

Greg Fillers, seated, chief of programs and project management, speaks with Prisci program manager for the electricity sector, about various electrical projects she is [USACE PHOTO by Mohammed Aliwi]

Perry noted that the purpose of the SCADA project is to provide the national power-system with a much needed carrier upgra renovation.

This includes building new control centers in the northern, central and southern regions.

The project adds remote telemetry units, equipment cabling in substations and power plants, and provides a microwave upgra

renovation.

"This project is very important for the power plants and substations. The old SCADA networks were not working properly due lack of maintenance," she said.

For Perry, having a new SCADA system could provide a good connection between all the power plants and the substations.

"SCADA networks are commonly used by electricity and natural gas utilities, water and sewage utilities, railroads, and other c infrastructure organizations. They enable remote monitoring, control of an amazing variety of industrial devices and are used fo measurement and control systems.

"Some of the new provided systems have never been used in Iraq before. For example, the central control communication sta contact any part of the country and ask for reduction in loads," she said.

Perry said 118 regional control centers are being established in Iraq's 18 provinces.

Thirty-two of them are located in the southern part of Iraq under the construction oversight of the GRS.

Thirty-eight national dispatch control centers are located across the country, with five in the southern region.

"Once the project is finished, it will allow the substations to communicate with each other to distribute the electrical power bet people want more electrical power to reach their homes and this project will make that much easier," Perry said.

"Unfortunately, the new communication and remote terminal control units do not improve the capacity of the existing power si Perry said. "Iraq needs more power generations to balance the new power consumption. Many Iraqi people are happy about th that the USACE has had recently, but they cannot express their gladness (because they fear for) their lives."

Greg F. Fillers, GRS chief of programs and project management, said, "SCADA is an important step in modernizing the electr all of Iraq. It will help the electrical utilities personnel to get the most use of the available electricity, and deliver it to the largest r people."

"It will save wear on the equipment used to deliver power to peoples' homes and businesses, and when a piece of equipment down, will help to find the exact problem and fix it sooner," he said.

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